

6 June 1956

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence**

**SUBJECT: O/NE Comments on Present Nature of Threat  
to South Vietnam**

1. We have reviewed our estimates bearing on the situation in Vietnam\* in the light of the contributions to the new Vietnam estimate which is due to the IAC on 17 July. The portions of these estimates which relate to Vietminh intentions and to the internal security situation remain substantially valid, but some modifications in particular situations are noted below.

2. Although the Vietnamese National Army (about 142,000 men) has made gradual progress in reorganization and training, it still could not delay an invasion of the greatly superior Vietminh army (about 265,000 regular

\* NIE 13-56: Chinese Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action through 1960 (5 January 1956); NIE 63.1-3-55: Probable Developments in Vietnam to July 1956 (11 October 1955); and NIE 63.1-55: Probable Developments in North Vietnam (19 July 1955).

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troops) for more than 60 days north of the Ban Ma Thuot-Nha Trang area. (South Central Annam.)

3. However, we continue to believe, as stated in NIE 13-56 (Chinese Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action through 1969) that the Vietminh will not launch an open invasion of South Vietnam, at least for the next year or so. The Communists will be restrained from overt military action by fear of possible US counteraction and by the requirements of their present "peaceful" tactics. ✓

4. We continue to believe that the Vietminh may attempt to stir up armed resistance within the South, possibly supported by the infiltration of armed personnel from the North. Although our estimate of the number of armed Vietminh in the South is down a bit from last year's figure of 10,000, the Vietminh probably could develop a guerrilla effort, on such a scale as to deny large areas of rural Vietnam to Vietnamese control. However, the over-all security situation within the South is improving due to the increasing effectiveness of Vietnam's military and security forces, the extension of the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps network. ✓

and political and economic measures of the government.

**FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:**

**SHERMAN KENT**  
**Assistant Director**  
**National Estimates**

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